

Perfect Norway

Johnny: Yes, this is Radio Norway with Johnny Jensen, talking about the interesting article we just received from the Los Angeles Times, where Norway is claimed to be the best country in the world, not only that, but, "Norway is heaven on earth, where all men and women are equal, where no one is homeless or hungry, where everyone shares the wealth, not just in Norway, but with the rest of the world's less fortunate." Yes, ladies and gentlemen, Norway is definitely the place to be. According to the UN human development report Norway ranks number one on the list of countries to live in the world, and we have the best health, wealth, and social outlook of any country in the world. We leave our doors unlocked when we go out, which is a little bit hard to believe, but that's what the article claims, and that we have a sense of personal security that is unimaginable to Americans. Well, I think I'll just stop right there, and turn this over to callers, and see what they have to say, whether they agree that Norway is this paradise. So, let's go to the first caller please.

Penelope: Good morning.

Johnny: Good morning.

Penelope: Good morning. My name is Penelope Smith, and I have lived in Norway for six years, and I must say that even though I come from a beautiful country, Great Britain, I absolutely love living in Norway. I do think that that report you read is a little overrated, and kind of makes Norway into a sort of utopia. But, nevertheless, I would agree that we have one of the best welfare states in the world, and I think that the children have a chance to grow up to understand empathy and respect others, but it drives me mad that ten percent of our salary is kept for us, in holiday money. That drives me mad.

Johnny: OK, but, tell me something, you say you're from Great Britain, that means you moved to Norway because Norway is a better country, is that correct?

Penelope: Well, I guess it was the old "l'amour."

Johnny: "L'amour!" Yes, that would be the fact that you fell in love with a Norwegian man?

Penelope: That's right. I did.

Johnny: Yes.

Penelope: Um-hum, and, so that was the biggest reason to move here, and I think that the country has so much to offer a family, absolutely.

Johnny: So you absolutely agree that this... that, for example women are equal to men in Norway, that there's total equality as this article suggests?

Penelope: No, I think that that's stretching it a little bit, and in fact, studies show that in the UK, even though we're a modern society, only twenty five percent of the good jobs go to women, but in Norway it's less actually, it's a little bit less here.

Johnny: OK. Next caller, what's your name please?

Elizabeth: My name is Elizabeth Partridge, and I would just like to say, I have lived here many years, and I'm also from Britain, I've lived here for thirty years now, and when I first came to Norway I must say it was very idyllic, and it was a beautiful country to live, and I still think so, I still do, but I think that it's very, very exaggerated that report, because there are homeless people in this country, and the welfare state in this country doesn't work as well as they maintain it works. There are an incredible number of people who cannot get hospitalized because they don't have enough beds, they don't have enough nurses, and people... the patients who are in hospital here, they're often in the corridors, and I think that is very, very undignified for a country like Norway to put people in the corridors for one thing, and to make them wait maybe two years to get their hips replaced. If you lived in France, which is also a welfare state, you would have your hip replaced tomorrow. If you lived in America, where they have to pay for healthcare, you would have no problems getting into a hospital, even though you would have to pay, and I think it's very...

Johnny: You would have to have money first, wouldn't you?

Elizabeth: You would have to have the money, yes, but I still think that this country can afford to run their hospital systems in a better fashion.

Johnny: You've... You've mentioned some interesting aspects here though, but I do believe that there has been cutbacks in schools for example, recently.

Elizabeth: Yes, oh yes, I mean, I don't think the schools are doing terribly well. Eh, I mean, my grandchild, the other day, she had to go in and wash her school. I mean, OK, I think it's fair enough that children have to take part and do chores, but really! I mean, don't they have people to wash schools, or paint schools?

Johnny: It seems more to me the money is the problem here. So, where is all this oil money going to, perhaps we can ask.

Elizabeth: Exactly.

Johnny: But let's go back to Penelope. Penelope are you still there?

Penelope: Yes, I still am. I really appreciate the other caller's points, I really do, and a nice hello, nice to hear someone else that comes from Britain here.

Elizabeth: Hello Penelope.

Penelope: Hello there, but I really feel that we got to appreciate the differences in homelessness. Yes, but one in five people in Britain now live under the poverty line. One in five children live in poverty, it's terrible in the UK, and in maybe in America, forty three million people in America live with no insurance, no welfare, so I understand your point caller, but I'm afraid in evaluating the situation then we have what? Sixty thousand people here homeless? Big difference!

Elizabeth: In a country as rich as Norway there shouldn't be any people who are homeless, and there shouldn't be anybody waiting for a hospital bed.

Penelope: But in any service that's consumer led, sorry to interrupt, I feel that you naturally will have these problems.

Johnny: OK, one last question, what is the future for Norway? Are we gonna continue to be a good welfare state? Penelope?

Penelope: A difficult point, I think that we need to start producing more things. Very worrying to hear this week that Findus are moving all fishfinger factories to France and Sweden. So, we're producing the fish, but not the fishfingers. I think we need to produce.

Johnny: OK, and caller number two?

Elizabeth: I think that it's about time that Norway dipped into their pockets and said "OK, we are going to use some of this oil money," that we have been talking about, that we have in our little bankbook. I think that they should use it for things that are going to be good for all the people, like hospitals and schools.

Johnny: Thank you, callers.